

Message Text

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46

ACTION AGR-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 AID-20 CIAE-00 COME-00

EB-11 FRB-03 INR-11 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-07

OPIC-12 SP-03 CIEP-03 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 NSC-07

SS-20 STR-08 CEA-02 L-03 H-03 PRS-01 PA-04 USIA-15

NIC-01 SAJ-01 SAM-01 SWF-02 EA-11 NEA-14 DRC-01 /233 W

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R 310914Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1650

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION GENEVA

UNCLAS BRUSSELS 5767

PASS AGRICULTURE

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EAGR

SUBJECT: FARMER DEMONSTRATIONS AND DEMANDS

1. SUMMARY: WALLOON FARMERS AGAIN JAMMED HIGHWAYS WITH THEIR TRACTORS THROUGHOUT SOUTHERN BELGIUM MONDAY TO PUBLICIZE THEIR DEMANDS THAT THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT ENACT "URGENT" MEASURE TO CARRY OUT PROGRAMS AUTHORIZED BY THE EC COUNCIL DECISIONS OF JULY 15-16 AND OTHER PROPOSALS TO HELP SOLVE DURRENT CRISIS IN
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FARM INCOME CAUSED BY FALLING PRICES FOR CATTLE,HOGS,POULTRY AND

EGGS WHILE PRODUCTION COSTS HAVE RISEN SHARPLY. AT MEETING HELD JULY 18 ADMINISTER LAVENS PROMISED FARM ORGANIZATIONS A SERIES OF MEASURES BY JULY 31 DESIGNED TO SOLVE CRISIS. END SUMMARY.

2. WALLON FARMERS PARADED TRACTORS THROUGH SOUTHERN BELGIAN TOWNS MONDAY TO EMPHASIZE THEIR DEMANDS FOR THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT TO HONOR ITS PROMISE TO ENACT MEASURES BY JULY 31 TO SOLVE CURRENT FARM CRISIS. MOST MANIFESTATIONS CONSISTED OF FROM 40 TO 200 TRACTORS AND WERE GENERALLY ORDERLY. THEY SOUGHT TO "INFORM" THE PUBLIC OF THEIR PROBLEMS AND DEMANDS. SOME TRACTORS CARRIED SIGNS SUCH AS "PRODUCE MORE, WORK MORE, EARN LESS," AND "CONSUMERS: OUR INTERESTS ARE YOURS." WHILE SEVERAL THOUSAND TRACTORS INVOLVED ALTOGETHER, FEW ROADS WERE BLOCKED INTENTIONALLY IN CONTRAST TO JULY 15-16 WHEN INTERSECTIONS WERE FREQUENTLY BLOCKED. THIS DEMONSTRATION ORGANIZED MAINLY BY U.P.A. (PROFESSIONAL FARMERS UNION) WHICH STRONGEST IN WALLONIA BUT ALL THREE MAJOR FARMER ORGANIZATIONS (INCLUDING BOERENBOND AND BELGIAN FARMERS ALLIANCE-AAB) FROM "GREEN FRONT" WHICH JOINTLY PUTTING PRESSURE ON BELGIAN GOVERNMENT. DEMONSTRATIONS RECEIVED FRONT PAGE NEWSPAPER AND PROMINENT TV COVERAGE IN BELGIUM.

3. THE "GREEN FRONT" AND DEMONSTRATORS DEMANDED THAT THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT APPLY BY JULY 31 MOST OF MEASURES AUTHORIZED BY THE EC COUNCIL ON JULY 16 PROVIDING THE FOLLOWING: (A) PREMIUMS TO PRODUCERS FOR DELAYING MARKETING OF LARGE CATTLE EXCEPT COWS AT INCREASING RATES FROM AUGUST 1 TO FEBRUARY 28; (B) SALE OF BEEF TO (1) INSTITUTIONS AND (2) LOW-INCOME CONSUMERS AT REDUCED PRICES; (C) POLICY OF HIGH PAYMENTS FOR EXPORTS INCLUDING CANNING BEEF FOR DONATION TO WORLD FOOD PROGRAM; (D) PROMOTION CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE CONSUMPTION OF BEEF (50 PER CENT TO BE PAID BY FEOGA); (E) REDUCTION OF VAT AND OTHER TAXES ON BEEF; AND (F) MORE EFFECTIVE DATE OF HIGHER SUPPORT PRICE FOR PORK FOR NEXT MARKETING YEAR FROM NOVEMBER 1 TO OCTOBER 1.

4. THE U.P.A. INFORMED MINISTER LAVENS FOLLOWING JULY 18 MEETING WITH "GREEN FRONT" THAT THEY CONSIDERED REDUCTION OF VAT AND OTHER TAXES ON BEEF WOULD HAVE UNCERTAIN IMPACT ON CONSUMPTION AND LITTLE BENEFIT TO FARMERS. PROPOSED INSTEAD GOVERNMENT USE EQUIVALENT FUNDS TO INCREASE REFUNDS OF VAT TO FARMERS FOR SUPPLIES (FEEDS, FERTILIZER, PESTICIDES, EQUIPMENT, ETC.) AS

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DEMANDED BY "GREEN FRONT" TO REDUCE COSTS. WHILE THE U.P.A. DID NOT CONSIDER EC PROPOSALS (B(2) AND (D) OF PARA. 3 ABOVE URGENT, THEY REQUESTED OTHER EC PROPOSALS TO BE ENACTED PLUS THE FOLLOWING: (A) INCREASE IN MAXIMUM AMOUNTS OF INVESTMENT FUNDS FOR YOUNG FARMERS; (B) IMPROVE OPERATION OF GRAIN STORAGE AND DAIRY PRICE SUPPORT OPERATIONS; (C) MAKE CONCRETE PROPOSALS FOR AIDING THE DEPRESSED REGION OF SOUTHEAST BELGIUM; AND (D) COMPENSATION FOR HIGHER MILK COLLECTION COSTS IN SOUTHEASTERN

BELGIUM.

5. COMMENT: THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT IS EXPECTED TO ANNOUNCE NEW MEASURES NEXT DAY OR TWO ATTEMPTING MEET MOST IF NOT ALL OF FARMER DEMANDS.

WHEN AMBASSADOR PAID COURTESY CALL ON MINISTER LAVENS JULY 29, MINISTER SPENT MOST OF TIME EXPLAINING DOMESTIC FARM PROBLEMS AND DID NOT RAISE ANY US-BELGIAN OR US-EC ISSUES.FIRESTONE

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